

Are you setting up a volunteer group in response to COVID-19?

- Before setting up your own group check if there are any other local forums already and if you can join with them (contact local councillors and GP surgeries).
- Refer to Public Health guidance which is regularly updated <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>
- Volunteers could unwittingly spread the virus to isolated and vulnerable people, and this needs to be managed very carefully. Make sure that anyone stepping forward to help is aware of the latest government information and guidance and encourage them to take all possible precautions to protect themselves and the wider community.
- As this will be a rapidly changing situation, make sure that volunteers know that they do not have to continue to volunteer if they are concerned or unsure at a later stage.
- Think carefully about how you ensure that vulnerable people are kept safe. Keep their information secure and try and give everyone at least a basic understanding of safeguarding and what they should do if they have concerns (MSVA can provide advice and template policies).
- New volunteers should ideally be DBS checked and inducted before they have unsupervised access to vulnerable people in their own homes/care homes, otherwise they could pose a safeguarding risk.
- There may not be time to process new DBS checks, so find out whether your volunteers have a recent DBS from another activity and assign tasks accordingly. This could also apply to professional experience and acquired training (such as Safeguarding).
- Think creatively and encourage people to volunteer in other roles, such as telephone befriending or in back office roles.
- If possible, identify one or more people whose role will be co-ordinating volunteers, providing regular communication and maintaining accurate and up-to-date information.
- While the process of gathering information from volunteers will need to be flexible, make sure that you have some basic details and keep them safe.
- Make a decision about the minimum and maximum age of your volunteers.
- Be prepared to manage people's expectations - they will be hoping to volunteer immediately but it may take some time for you to find something for them to do.